**Variations on a Theme**

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# Variations on a Theme

by jessahmewren

Summary

In a world where slavery is commonplace, Hannibal has never felt the need for one. That is, until he meets a young slave named Will.

Notes

This story takes place in somewhat of a dystopia where slavery is a fact of life. Hannibal is still Hannibal, but I don't focus on him being the Chesapeake Ripper.

This has been a labor of love, and would not have been possible without the tireless encouragement of my wonderful friend and talented writer Tiffany (Lady41022). I love you my friend.

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

# Chapter 1

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Hannibal awoke just as dawn was painting the sky in brushstrokes of coral and cream. He deftly stepped into his slippers where they waited on the polished wood floor and wrapped himself in his favorite robe. Light was streaming in through the windows of his bedroom, and he teased the curtains open to let more in. It promised to be a beautiful day.

Later that morning found him sat in the kitchen, slowly sipping his coffee while browsing his tablet. He had business to attend to, unfortunately, but at least it was Saturday and he wouldn't have to go into the office.

He dressed and drove to a nondescript warehouse in Baltimore's business district. He stepped out into the parking lot still wet and glittering with last night's rain and made his way to the office. It was grey, depressing in its industrial utility and lack of aesthetics. Hannibal carefully disguised his distaste at his surroundings as a heavy-set, balding man made his way around the desk, his hand extended in greeting.

He shook the clammy hand, mouth turning downward and fighting the urge to wipe his palm on his trousers. The man was none the wiser as he motioned for Hannibal to sit in the lone chair facing the desk.

"I have the documents you requested," the man said as he passed over a parcel to Hannibal. Hannibal took a moment to thumb through them, his eyebrows raised in interest.

The passports and papers were all pristine, as usual. Hannibal expected nothing less; that's why he used the best forger money could buy. Such precautions were the price of keeping his lifestyle the way it was.

Hannibal's mouth quirked into a faint smile. "Everything is in order, Carlos. These will do nicely." He reached inside his jacket and withdrew a thick padded envelope, handing it over to the man who counted it greedily. Hannibal stood to leave, certain their business was done and eager to retreat to the solace of his home.

"Won't you check out my latest stock?" The man's face creased into an oily smile. "Beautiful specimens…boys and girls both."

Hannibal did not hide his disgust. "I'm in no need of a slave, Carlos. Pardon me if I decline your offer."

Carlos stepped around the desk, his arms extended. "Won't you have just a peek? They're worth a look, I promise you."

Hannibal sighed. He did not want to be rude, but he was truly disinterested in the slave trade. He did want to keep his working relationship with Carlos, however, so he decided to humor the man just this once.

He finally smiled, humorless and slightly put upon. "Of course," Hannibal said with a slight incline of his head. "Lead the way."

Carlos led them through the auto repair shop encompassing most of the warehouse to a backdoor. The door opened to a cavernous space, harshly lit and drafty.

The slaves knelt chained together, soft whines and moans resonating amongst them. None of them looked up as Carlos led Hannibal down the line, talking rather crudely about each one.

The boy sat on the cold concrete floor, naked and covered in filth. The heavy chain around his waist was attached to his wrists, so he couldn't lift his arms. His neck was covered in a thick leather collar, and Hannibal could see where the skin had chafed. Of all the slaves he'd viewed in the warehouse, this little urchin was the only one he'd wanted to touch. So he did.

He put his hand in the matted curls and gently pushed the boy's head back. Stunning blue eyes, as deep and as wide as the sea stared up at him. They were brimming with tears, and Hannibal watched, transfixed, as one tear tracked down the boy's dirty cheek. Hannibal caught it with his thumb, wiping it away, and the boy's tongue snaked out to wet his cracked lips.

“He’s quiet,” Carlos said, “but he can take a cock. In whatever hole you put it in.” The portly man laughed hardily at his own joke, while Hannibal’s hand caressed the boy’s face.

“Try him out,” the man urged, and Hannibal slipped a thumb into the boy’s mouth. Gently, he began to suck, and Hannibal could feel his cock filling out. He could see this boy, balancing on his knees, taking what he was given. He would wash him until he was scrubbed pink and gleaming. He would feed him until he could no longer see his ribs.

And he would fuck him to bring him pleasure, not just to satisfy his carnal desires.

“I’ll take this one,” he said as the boy’s cheeks hollowed around his thumb. “How about it,” he said as he looked into those blue eyes. “Would you like to come home with me?”

The boy released his thumb with a plop, spit clinging to the plump edge of his lips. Then, as if he had a choice, he dipped his chin and whispered, “Yes, Master.”

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Hannibal led him to his waiting car, walking slowly to match the shuffling gait of the shackled boy. “He’ll run,” Carlos had said. “They all do when given the chance.” Hannibal wasn’t so sure.

He guided him with a hand hovering just over his back, unsure if touching the boy again would set him off or if he would take it as well as he had his thumb. The boy stopped at the rear of the vehicle, eyeing the trunk with expectation before bowing his head again.

“No,” Hannibal said gently. “You’ll ride in the car, with me.” The boy looked up, blue eyes shining with more unspent tears, and shook his head.

“You’re disagreeing,” Hannibal said with some fascination. The boy’s matted hair shimmied with the force of his refusal, silent though it was.

“Come now,” Hannibal said, his hand on the upper part of the boy’s arm. He could nearly wrap his whole hand around it, the boy was so small. “You’re not going to ride in the back like a piece of luggage.”

The boy whispered something, and Hannibal leaned in close to hear. “Property,” he said again, “this slave is property.”

Hannibal frowned, fighting buyer’s remorse. He expected the boy to be obstinate, but not this. This was conditioning, and for some reason it didn’t sit well with him.

“Yes,” Hannibal agreed. “My property,” he said with a little squeeze of the boy’s arm. “And you’ll do as I say. Understood?”

“Yes Master,” the boy whispered, shivering even in the warm sunlight. Soundlessly, he ducked through the open back door and sat down at last.

Hannibal settled behind the wheel, marveling at how this day had unfolded. He had what he needed, and perhaps more than that. Something he wanted, maybe impulsively, but wanted all

the same. And now he had to deal with it.

He glanced in the rearview mirror. The top of the slave's head was visible where he sat staring at his lap. He was a miserable little wretch, Hannibal had to admit, dirty and frail. All things he could fix, he amended. He would shape and remake the boy into something shiny and new…something entirely his, with no touch of the rote training that now shaped his demeanor.

Hannibal smiled to himself, turning up the radio as he pointed the Bentley towards home. He always did like a project.

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The Bentley slotted into place in front of the stately house, the engine stuttering to a stop. Hannibal got out without a second glance to the other occupant in the car and went around to the back passenger side. He opened the door to find the boy still staring at his lap, his wrists biting into the chain at his waist.

"Come along now," Hannibal said gently. "We'll get these chains off."

He patted the key in his breast pocket, hoping to elicit some interest in the boy. He eased out of the car instead, head down, to stand in the driveway beside Hannibal.

If anyone saw a boy in chains entering Hannibal's home, they wouldn't think anything of it. Slavery fell under the property laws, and Hannibal was doing nothing illegal. He did rush the boy inside, however, because of propriety, and because of Hannibal's interest in maintaining a low profile.

The boy stood shivering in Hannibal's foyer, dirty toes digging into the runner there. Hannibal bent to him, unable to keep his hands from touching the boy, and tilted his chin up.

"Why tears, little one?" He said softly, smoothing the boy's hair away from his face. It would need a trim, but Hannibal would see it washed and shining before shears would ever touch it.

The boy sniffed bravely, allowing his eyes to meet Hannibal's. His chin quivered, but he did not cry.

Hannibal hummed and withdrew the key from his pocket. The boy's eyes brightened, impossibly blue.

"Are you going to run?"

The boy bit his lip. "Where would I go Master?"

It pleased Hannibal. "Indeed," he said as he grabbed the boy's wrist and fiddled with the lock. He unfastened the thick leather collar. The shackles fell to the floor with a loud clatter, and the boy sighed.

Hannibal touched the raw skin there, his lips pursed. The boy did not flinch, an intake of breath the only indication that he was in any discomfort.

“Follow me,” Hannibal said without looking back. “Let’s get you cleaned up.”

The boy grunted, standing staunchly in place. “I’ll be good,” he whispered. “Please no.”

Hannibal turned, kneeling so he could lock eyes with the boy. “You’re filthy,” he said dispassionately. “I keep a tidy home.”

The boy’s face crumpled in fear as Hannibal took him by the arms and dragged him a few steps forward. The boy dug his heels in, whining.

Hannibal huffed, taking a moment to compose himself against his rising annoyance. “Why don’t you want to get clean, hmm? You’ll be more comfortable, I assure you.”

The boy worried his plush bottom lip. “The hose,” he said despondently. “It stings.”

Realization dawned on Hannibal and he pressed his lips together. The boy had only ever been hosed down like an animal.

Hannibal cupped the boy’s cheek. “No hose,” he said sternly. “A bath. A nice, warm, relaxing bath.”

The boy looked up at him cautiously. “A bath?”

Hannibal nodded. “Come and see for yourself.”

The boy obeyed, walking slowly, head bowed. He stood with his newly freed arms hugging his slight frame as Hannibal filled the tub.

Hannibal took off his jacket and rolled up his sleeves. The water thundered into the large claw-foot tub, and Hannibal skimmed the surface of it to check the temperature. On a whim he added bubbles, and lavender oils to slate the dirt from the boy’s skin.

When all was ready, he helped the boy lower into the water.

“Oh,” the boy said softly, his eyes fluttering closed. He leaned into the water like a flower seeking the sun.

Hannibal gazed on the boy as he lay back in the tub, smudged little face and that mat of hair. He would need to change the water twice, he thought to himself, maybe three times before the boy was sufficiently cleaned.

Hannibal took a washcloth and cleaned his face, revealing milky skin and a ruddy pink cheek. He washed the boy methodically, marveling at the smooth skin and the occasional scar he uncovered with his ministrations.

The boy remained mostly silent and obedient, moving when Hannibal bid him, the warm water making him as loose as a ragdoll. Hannibal smiled as the boy took a handful of bubbles in his hand, marveling at them with those big blue eyes. He put his hand to his mouth and licked.

Hannibal laughed as the boy scrunched up his nose in displeasure. “That’s soap,” Hannibal intoned gently. “Not for eating, but for cleaning.”

“Cleaning,” the boy said. “This slave can clean.” He looked up at Hannibal. “For you, Master.”

Hannibal ran the washcloth up the boy’s arm, and he shivered. “*I* can clean,” Hannibal corrected. “Not ‘this slave.’ You may be a slave but you’re also a person, and I’ll have you talk as such.”

The boy just blinked at Hannibal, thoughtful. He was not to blame for his conditioning, Hannibal thought, and it would take time.

Hannibal grabbed a small foot from beneath the suds and began washing between the boy’s toes. “Besides, I clean my own house,” he said, and the boy flexed his foot before jerking back.

The boy made a little breathy sound, and Hannibal looked at him, amused. “Are you ticklish, little one?”

Then, feeling wicked, Hannibal scratched at the bottom of the boy’s foot experimentally.

The boy immediately kicked out, splashing Hannibal for his efforts. He couldn’t suppress a laugh. “I suppose I deserve that,” he said wryly.

The bath finished, Hannibal reached for the shampoo. He took the shower attachment down and let it gently spray over the boy’s head, pleased in the way the boy relaxed under the torrent.

He shampooed the boy’s hair thoroughly, rinsing and conditioning the mats and letting them sit while he trimmed his nails. He worked in silence, stealing little glances at the boy. Hannibal hummed softly, and he could feel the boy watching him, clearly listening to the tune.

“Vivaldi,” he said softly. “He was a classical composer in the 18$^{th}$ century. Do you like music?”

“I like whatever you like, Master,” he replied softly.

Hannibal frowned. “No, you have your own likes and dislikes.” He sighed. “I’ll play Vivaldi at dinner. You will give me your opinion then.”

The boy didn’t say anything, just silently watched Hannibal where he fussed over the boy’s nails. They were long and jagged, broken in places, and Hannibal took great care to file and shape them thoughtfully.

Once he’d rinsed his hair, he helped the boy out of the bath. His skin was pink from the heat of the water, his hairless chest flushed from the thorough scrubbing Hannibal had given him.

Hannibal took a moment to appraise the boy now that he was clean, his eyes trailing over his tapered hips and cock, his shapely legs as shaky as a new colt's. When he had looked his fill, he wrapped a towel around his waist and sat him down in front of the bathroom mirror.

When the boy saw the comb in Hannibal's hand, he shook his head. Hannibal steadied the boy's shoulders, his voice firm. "None of that," Hannibal said. "You can make this easy or difficult. It's up to you."

The boy frowned, then seemingly steeled himself as he avoided his own reflection.

Hannibal worked the comb through the knots, made easier now that his hair had been washed and conditioned. He watched in delight as each freed tress sprang back from his hand, a pretty curl.

"What's your name?" Hannibal inquired, realizing he had no idea what to call the boy.

He was silent, staring at his lap, at the fluffy towel that now covered his legs. "Slaves don't have names," he muttered.

Hannibal continued combing his hair, gathering it in his hands and sorting the strands until they slid free. "Everyone has a name," Hannibal said patiently. "What's yours?"

The boy began to rub his hands together, clearly agitated. Hannibal surmised that he must think this is a trick, and had probably been punished for using his name in the past. He put the comb down.

"No harm will come to you for telling me," Hannibal said. "So tell me."

He mewled softly, leaving his hands to rest at his thighs. He stole a glance at Hannibal, quick and barely reaching chin level. "Will," he finally said. "This slave—"he began, but stopped himself. "*My name* is Will."

Hannibal smiled. "Very good Will.  You've been very brave."

Will sighed as if decompressing, and Hannibal could see his shoulders drop. "I'll get you some clothes to wear."

Will jerked his head, visibly startled. "Clothes," he said, a little bemused. Then he nodded as if understanding something. "This slave doesn't please you."

Hannibal was caught off guard. He put his hands out, gripping the boy's upper arms. "You please me greatly, Will. Clothes are for your comfort. They're for you, not me."

Will stared at him, wide-eyed, but said nothing.  Hannibal left him and went to his closet.

Hannibal picked something soft from his own wardrobe, a green sweater and lounge pants. After all, he had never expected having a houseguest when he had started his day. They would swallow the boy's small frame, but would do until Hannibal could do better.

Will was sitting where Hannibal had left him, avoiding the mirror and worrying his hands. Hannibal placed the clothes on the vanity and turned to Will.

“Change into these; leave the towel where it falls. I’ll clean it up. When you’re dressed, come into the bedroom.”

He left him without another word, gathering his first aid kit and arranging it on the edge of the bed. After a few minutes Will appeared in the doorway of the en suite, the wide collar of his borrowed sweater hanging off one shoulder. His hair had dried, shoulder-length curls framing his youthful face. He was beautiful, and Hannibal couldn’t stop gazing at him.

Will seemed to decide something then, and crossed the floor to stand before Hannibal. He suddenly dropped to his knees, his hands fussing with Hannibal’s belt and zipper. Will had him partially out before Hannibal could stop him.

He looked up at Hannibal with those wide blue eyes, questioning and anxious. Hannibal brushed his hair away from his face, then settled a hand to cup his cheek. “No,” Hannibal said gently. “Stop Will.”

Will licked his lips. “Why Master?”

Hannibal wavered, his thumb stroking Will’s bottom lip. “Because you don’t want to,” he said gently. “And that’s reason enough. Now get up.”

Will scrambled to his feet, shaky and unsure of himself. Hannibal led him to the edge of the bed and sat him down. He withdrew some ointment from the kit and held it out. “Let me see your wrists.”

Will held them out dutifully, wincing a little as Hannibal probed them. “They’ll heal,” Hannibal said, “but there’s scarring. This should help the discomfort.”

He applied the ointment and wrapped each wrist with care. Hannibal swept Will’s hair behind his ear, nosing the air between them. Now that Will was clean, his own scent bloomed, fresh rain and cinnamon.

“Let me see your neck Will.”

Hannibal put his hands on the lovely column of Will’s neck, the abraded skin a ring of angry red. It was oozing in places, and Hannibal ministered to it gently.

“Are you a doctor?” Will asked timidly. It was the first time he had asked a question of Hannibal, and it pleased him.

Hannibal hummed as he worked. “Yes,” he said simply. “I used to be a surgeon, many years ago.” He appraised the abraded flesh with gloved fingers. “This area is infected.”

Blue eyes flashed in alarm, looking up at Hannibal in near panic. “This slave can be useful,” Will stammered. “Master please.”

Hannibal smoothed his thumb over the beautiful line of his jaw, feeling the tension there. “I’m not sending you back, Will. It just means you need antibiotics. I’ll give them to you after dinner.”

Will looked at his hands, the white bandages wrapped carefully around his wrists. “This slave has never had medicine before,” he said lowly.

Hannibal grabbed him by the face, pulling his gaze up to meet his. “Listen to me very carefully, Will. Stop it with that dissociative nonsense. I don’t ever want to hear ‘this slave’ from your mouth ever again. Are we clear?”

Will struggled to hold his gaze, but he didn’t look away. He nodded furiously, whining against the hold Hannibal had on his face.

“Let me hear you.”

“Y-yes Master. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean-“

Hannibal released him. “I know you didn’t,” he said as he rubbed color back into the fingermarks he’d left. “It’s not something you’re aware you’re doing. But I wish it to change all the same.”

Will nodded again, fiddling with the hem of his sweater.

“Come,” Hannibal said, “I need to prepare dinner.”

Will followed Hannibal into the kitchen, his wide eyes taking in everything in the room. Hannibal indicated a chair in the corner and bade him sit. Will just stared at him before folding down onto the floor beside it.

Hannibal sighed, but said nothing. Will drew his legs to his chest and leaned his head on the arm of the chair. His eyes never left Hannibal.

Hannibal quickly lost himself in his dinner preparations, humming along to the record player, his hands moving mellifluously over the ingredients and the cutting board before transferring it all to the stove. He had decided on something banal—grilled chicken with vegetables--flavorful enough for his own sensibilities but bland enough for Will’s untrained stomach.

“What do you think, Will? About Vivaldi?”

Will pressed his lips together, listening more intently.

“Do you like this music, or should we play something else?”

Will closed his eyes for a moment. “This one,” he finally said, and Hannibal nodded, unable to hide his smirk.

“So you like Vivaldi,” he said as he chopped a vegetable. “Good to know.”

Hannibal was immersed in his work when he began to see movement out of the corner of his eye. Will was rocking back and forth, a pinched expression on his face.

“Will? Are you alright?”

Will suppressed a whine, still rocking back and forth. Hannibal became alarmed and eased around the counter to kneel in front of him.

“Hurts,” Will muttered. “Sorry Master.”

Hannibal placed a hand against his abdomen and pressed. Will squirmed away from his touch.

“Do you have to use the bathroom Will?

Will nodded, biting his lip. “Sorry,” he said again.

Hannibal stroked his hair. “Sorry for being a human being?” He smiled. “No need. Let me show you where to go Will.”

He led Will to the downstairs bathroom, leaving the door open in case Will needed assistance. When he had finished, he saw Will drinking from the faucet.

Hannibal met him at the doorway with a glass of water. “You must be thirsty,” he said softly.

Will gave a little half smile, the first time he had done so, and grabbed the glass with both hands. He gulped from it before handing it back to Hannibal.

“It’s yours,” Hannibal said as he led him back to the chair. “And I’ll refill it when you’re done.”

Will eyed him, disbelieving.

“You can have as much food and water as you want here Will. You won’t go hungry.”

Will’s fingers were white where he gripped the glass. Tears filled his eyes, and he lifted his gaze as far as Hannibal’s mouth. “Thank you Master. For everything.”

Hannibal reached out to cup his cheek, let his hand travel down the boy’s neck to squeeze his shoulder. “You’re more than welcome Will.”

Warmth flooded Hannibal’s chest at the boy’s answering smile. He watched him as he assumed his place on the floor, holding the glass of water like it was a precious jewel.

After some time the boy fell asleep, glass of water drained and sitting on the floor beside him. His features were soft in sleep, his brow smooth over long curling lashes. His lips were slightly parted, and Hannibal reached out to tuck a stray curl and smooth it behind his ears.

“Will,” Hannibal said quietly, massaging the boy’s neck with a curl of his fingers. “Time for dinner.”

The boy stirred to wakefulness, blinking at Hannibal in the bright light of the kitchen. “Yes Master,” he mumbled sleepily, and let Hannibal pull him to his feet. He led the boy to the dining room and settled him in one of the chairs to his left.

Will shifted uncomfortably, gripping the edge of his seat. By the time Hannibal returned with their plates, he was sweating.

“Master?” Will looked up at Hannibal warily. “Please.”

Hannibal sat down and tucked into his meal. He placed his utensils on either side of his plate and looked up at the boy with barely restrained frustration. “What do you need from me Will?”

The boy stammered. “Slaves eat on the floor Master,” he said almost shamefully. “I don’t know—“

Hannibal reached out and grabbed the boy’s hand. He stroked a thumb over his knuckles, and it seemed to settle him. The boy was vibrating in his chair, on the verge of a full blown panic attack.

“You can eat at my feet,” Hannibal said, acquiescing, “Just for tonight. But you must use utensils. Do you understand Will?”

“Yes Master,” Will said eagerly and he dropped to the floor by Hannibal’s feet. Hannibal handed him his plate, his spoon and fork, and let his hand settle in Will’s hair.

Dinner was a silent affair save for the wanton sounds of enjoyment Will didn’t even try to contain. He ate noisily and without much grace, but he used the utensils, and Hannibal resolved that the rest would come with time.

Will hummed contentedly, plate cleaned, and Hannibal stroked his hair. Hannibal looked down and the boy had one hand on his full stomach, and he was relaxed against Hannibal’s chair, eyes heavy with sleep.

Hannibal dabbed at his mouth and stood, careful not to push the chair out too forcefully. He helped Will stand, the sweater slipping from the boy’s shoulder again. Hannibal licked his lips. “Time for bed Will.”

He grabbed the boy’s hand, tugging him upstairs. He left Will standing in the door of the guest bedroom while he retrieved a spare toothbrush and a pair of his pajamas. When he returned, the boy was naked on the bed, back bent seductively.

Hannibal took a moment to observe the boy, plump round ass in the air, arms stretched submissively in front of him. His head was bent low, and he trembled slightly.

“Put your clothes back on Will.”

For a moment, Will didn’t move. He stole a glance at Hannibal, puffy eyes peeking through his hair. “Master?”

“Put your clothes back on,” Hannibal repeated, his lips pursed thoughtfully. “When you’re dressed, come into my bedroom and we’ll have a chat.”

Will sat up, suddenly ashamed. His cheeks flushed bright red, and he moved to cover himself. He had never been conscious of his nudity before, but he was suddenly very aware of it.

When Will walked into the room, he was ringing his hands nervously. He took small wavering steps toward Hannibal, his head down.  Hannibal tutted, patting the spot beside him on the bed.

Will met Hannibal’s gaze bravely, his lip quivering. “Am I to be punished Master?”

Hannibal shook his head. “Come and sit.”

Will did so, scarcely able to regulate his breathing. Hannibal smoothed a hand down his back, and he could feel the rabbit heart racing within.

“Look at me Will.”

He did so, tears filling his eyes. Somehow he didn’t shake apart with anxiety.

“You don’t have to pay me with your body. You’re worth more than that.”

“But your kindness—“

“It’s called humanity, Will, and you deserve at least that and so much more.” Hannibal sighed. “You will learn,” he said simply.

Will licked his lips, his shoulders still trembling with nervousness. He nodded. He was a quick study. He would learn what pleased this master and be what he needed. He wouldn’t get sent back, not again.

Hannibal reached out and caressed the boy’s cheek. He let his hand trail down along his shoulders and back to settle just at his waist. The boy was coiled with tension. He doubted he would sleep.

“Has anyone ever touched you for your own pleasure?”

Will opened his mouth to respond, but promptly snapped it shut. Hannibal smiled.

“Lie down on your belly,” Hannibal urged him, and the boy did as he was told.

Hannibal knelt by him on the bed. He smoothed his hands over the boy’s back and shoulders, leaning in to ease the knots there. Beneath him Will sighed, a pleased little sound escaping his lips.

Hannibal massaged him with soft, comforting touches, starting at his scalp and letting his fingers dance over the pearls of his spine, smoothing planes of muscle as he went. He could feel Will relax beneath his hands, and it brought him a curious sort of joy.

When Will's breathing evened out, Hannibal knew he was asleep. He stopped his ministrations long enough to stand and turn the boy onto his back. Gently, he scooped him up and carried him into the guest bedroom.

Hannibal lay Will on the turned-down sheets, pausing for a moment to make sure his head was on the pillow. He watched the boy sleep for a few moments, captivated by his quiet beauty. Then, he shut off the light and returned to his bedroom where sleep quickly found him.

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# Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Hannibal sees Bedelia and takes Will shopping.

Chapter Notes

Thanks so much for the support for Chapter One. I really appreciate it!

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The next morning came as any other, the sun bleeding through the gossamer curtains of Hannibal's bedroom. Hannibal blinked to awareness, suddenly remembering the new occupant of his home just a few doors away.

He swung his legs out of bed, foregoing the robe in his enthusiasm. He reached the door to the guest room and swung it open.

The bed was empty. The bedding was stripped from the bed, and Will was nowhere in sight. A momentary flash of panic straightened Hannibal's spine. Did he leave in the night? Was he somewhere on the street, lost and confused? Hannibal pressed deeper into the room.

Will was curled up on a nest of blankets near the back wall, sound asleep. Hannibal watched him where he slept, his legs curled to his chest, a peaceful look on his face. He smiled, marveling at the strange creature that had upended his life.

Hannibal departed the room, closing the door behind him. Will was clearly exhausted, but Hannibal had hoped to speak with him before he had to leave for his appointment with Bedelia.

It would be good to get his feelings out in the open, and Bedelia had an uncanny way of giving him perspective. He would leave him a note and breakfast on the table. It would be enough.

After preparing Will a light breakfast, Hannibal showered and dressed. He checked on Will again before slipping out of the house and making his way across town to Bedelia's home. Hannibal was her only client, after all—no need to keep an office.

Bedelia met him at the door, shining blond hair swept over one shoulder. Her face was impassively prim, her eyes guarded. She ushered him inside with unhurried movements and took her usual seat by the window.

Hannibal settled in front of her, a little thrill of anticipation fluttering in his belly. He had never been totally honest with someone about his true self, but the most he had divulged had been to Bedelia's patient ear.

Bedelia sat waiting, her customary glass of wine on the table next to her, the silk of her blouse complimenting her glossy hair. She wanted Hannibal to speak first, he knew.

"So," he began, "I've taken a slave."

Her eyebrows lifted, and she reached for her glass of wine. "I would've never taken you for that sort," she said, her slow, measured way of speaking almost hypnotic.

"Nor I," Hannibal conceded. "It was quite unexpected."

She sat the wine glass down. "Impulsive?"

Hannibal acknowledged that with a tilt of his head. "A rare lapse in composure, to be sure."

Bedelia gave a soft smile that didn't reach her eyes. "This must be some slave to rattle you so in the moment."

Hannibal softened, thinking of Will. "He is quite beautiful," Hannibal allowed. "I find myself enamored."

Bedelia inclined her head. "Is he a pleasure slave?"

Hannibal frowned at the term, flicking an imagined speck of dust from his trousers. "He might've been, yes."

Bedelia cocked an eyebrow, pinning him with her piercing gaze. "You have not bedded him?"

Hannibal clasped his hands together, thoughtful. "I am a man of restraint after all."

This seemed to intrigue Bedelia. "But why? If that is his purpose, why deny yourself?"

Hannibal looked away, Bedelia's eyes flaying him with their intensity. She always saw more than he would prefer.

"I would have him willing," Hannibal admitted, feeling uncharacteristically vulnerable at the admission.

Bedelia made a little sound of revelation. "Hannibal, you don't want a slave; you want a relationship."

He didn't deny it.

“Do you think this slave is capable of returning your interest?” Bedelia pressed.

Hannibal sighed. “I am not sure. But I find myself wanting to do right by him…to fix the wrongs done to him.”

“You’re infatuated. You wish to nurture. To repair.”

“Yes,” Hannibal said, and it felt as though a great weight had been lifted from his chest. “I’ve never felt this way before.”

Bedelia smiled, soft and genuine. “Curious,” she said with another sip of her wine.

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Hannibal drove home, pensive and listening to Vivaldi. The composer made him think of Will, and he smiled. He hoped he had found his note and his breakfast. He could scarcely wait to see him.

Hannibal pulled the Bentley up to the curb, shutting off the engine. With a little thrill of excitement, he opened the door to his house and looked around. He walked into the kitchen where the muffins and fruit he had left for Will remained untouched, alongside his note.

He frowned. Will had not eaten as he had instructed him, and was nowhere to be found. With irritation rising, he bounded upstairs, calling for Will with every step.

When he opened the door to the guest room, he found him still in his nest, curled up on the floor. He blinked up at Hannibal, recognition and relief dawning on his face.

Without another thought, he stood and rushed Hannibal, arms outstretched. “Master!” he exclaimed, and fell into Hannibal’s arms.

“You came back,” he muttered. He was stuffy sounding, and Hannibal realized that he’d been crying.

Hannibal shooshed him, hands going up to cup his head against him. “Of course I came back. You didn’t get my note?”

He pulled back, eyes teary. He shook his head slightly. “I did Master, but…I can’t—“

“You can’t read,” Hannibal finished for him. It angered him that this fundamental skill had been denied Will. He looked down at him, so open and trusting, and swiped his thumb at a wayward tear.

Hannibal smiled. “It’s no problem, Will. I’ll teach you.” He took Will by the hand, grazing his knuckles fondly.

“To read?” Will asked, almost disbelieving.

Hannibal nodded. “It will be my pleasure.”

He smiled then, and it lit his whole face. Hannibal noted that even his posture had changed; it was a wonder what a good meal, a bath, and a good night's sleep could do for someone.

"Let's go downstairs," Hannibal said, tugging him by the hand.

Hannibal led them into the kitchen, and Will eyed the uneaten food with obvious longing.

"I left that for you," Hannibal said. "Why didn't you eat it?"

Will worried his lower lip, his body tensing up. "I wasn't sure if it was for me. And I didn't want to be punished."

Hannibal nodded. He caressed Will's face, letting his touch linger.

"This is your home now, Will. There are no restrictions on what you are allowed to eat or drink. When I'm not here, I expect you to take care of yourself. And that includes eating. Do you understand?"

Will released his lip, leaving the plump flesh spit-shined and gleaming. "Yes Master," he said a little forlornly.

Hannibal thumbed over his mouth, finding it difficult to keep from touching him. "My name is Hannibal," he said. "Would you like to call me that?"

"Hannibal," Will said, testing out the name, and Hannibal decided that he liked the way it sounded.

"Let's have breakfast," Hannibal suggested, leading him to the kitchen island and ushering him into a stool there.

Will looked at Hannibal as he tied on an apron. "I can help you. Cook, I mean." Will looked down at his hands, uncertain. "I cooked for my other master."

Hannibal laid out the ingredients for eggs and pancakes, lining them up methodically. He began to cook, stealing little glances at Will where he sat watching him.

"Tell me about your other master."

Will worried his lip, his eyes downcast. "Master had a wife," he began, his voice small. "I cooked and cleaned for her. And Master took his pleasure at night, while his wife was asleep."

Hannibal slowed his stirring, a knot in his throat. "Why did he send you back," Hannibal almost whispered.

Will sighed. "Master's wife caught Master where I slept. "He was…taking his pleasure," Will mumbled. "She beat me and then she made him send me back."

Hannibal poured out one pancake and plated another. "I'm sorry that happened to you, Will. But I assure you nothing like that will ever happen again." He smiled, handing him his

breakfast. “I’m not sending you back.”

Will’s eyes brightened as he accepted the food, then looked immediately worried. “But what if I displease you Hannibal?”

Hannibal took his own plate and sat on the stool next to him. “You won’t,” He said confidently. “Now eat your breakfast.”

They ate in silence, Will still in his clothes from yesterday. He would take him shopping, Hannibal decided. Get him proper clothes, other things. Things that would bring him happiness.

Hannibal smiled to himself, set on his plan. Beside him, Will made little contented sounds of pleasure as he ate.

When they were finished, Will followed Hannibal upstairs where they stopped by the guest bathroom. “Take a shower and brush your teeth. I’ll leave some clothes for you by the door.”

Hannibal chose more soft clothing for Will, lounge pants that had a drawstring waistband and another sweater. It wasn’t exactly appropriate to be seen out in public in but it was all he had that would fit his smaller frame.

Hannibal showered and dressed also, another impeccably tailored suit. He made his way downstairs to wait on Will.

Will was luxuriating in the hot water, to be sure, and Hannibal smiled. There was so much he wanted to show him he was nearly bursting with it.

Will made his way downstairs, wet curls bouncing and darkening the borrowed navy blue sweater he wore. He wore socks, but Hannibal had no shoes that would fit him. He stopped in front of Hannibal and looked up at him expectantly.

“Ready to go?” Hannibal asked him gently, resisting the urge to reach out and drag a thumb along the smooth skin of his cheek.

Will nodded, fighting off a slight tremble. He was obviously nervous about leaving the house, but he fought hard not to show it. He followed Hannibal to the car and made no objection when Hannibal ushered him in the front seat.

Hannibal pulled away from the curb, hyper-aware of Will’s wide-eyed expression as he took in the passing surroundings. It was endearing to experience the world through Will’s eyes, especially since he had experienced some of the worst of humanity.

Hannibal made a silent mental note to dedicate one of his nocturnal visits to Will’s former master.

He pulled up to a well-known boutique in the business district and was pleased to find Will standing beside the car when he approached the passenger side. He looked stricken, and Hannibal placed a hand on his shoulder and squeezed.

“It’s alright Will. You’re with me, and I won’t let any harm come to you.”

Will gave him a watery smile before following Hannibal into the large swinging doors of the boutique, clutching the back of his suit as he walked.

Inside the boutique, chandeliers hung against a tufted ceiling, casting everything in a warm glow. Racks upon racks of clothes stood on either side of a small carpeted aisle, making Will feel slightly claustrophobic. His fingers tightened in Hannibal’s jacket, and a fine sweat broke out on his forehead.

Hannibal was quickly approached by a middle aged woman, glasses perched on her sharp nose. She smiled sweetly at Hannibal, completely ignoring the terrified-looking boy trailing behind.

“What can I help you with, sir?”

Hannibal spoke quietly with the woman while Will took in his surroundings. His heart was beating rapidly, and he tried to take a few steadying breaths.

Hannibal left him alone as he spoke with the woman, and Will suddenly felt exposed. He could feel eyes on him, and he ducked his head.

“Come here Will.” Hannibal’s voice broke into Will’s noisy mind, an oasis in a sea of overstimulation. Will walked to where Hannibal was standing in front of small pedestal and glanced meekly at the woman who was now openly gawking at him. “Try these on.”

Hannibal was holding several items of clothing that he handed off to Will, and Will took them and hugged them close to his chest. The woman reappeared, ushering Will passed a velvet curtain. He was horrified to discover that she intended to stay.

Alone with the wretched woman, Will felt small. He fingered the fine clothes nervously, wishing it was Hannibal instead of her.

The woman looked at him with thinly veiled contempt. “Let’s get that sweater off of you,” she said crisply, “you’re positively swimming in it.”

Will allowed himself to be undressed, crossing his arms over his chest when the sweater was removed. The woman then asked him to step out of his pants, and he stood there shivering under her scrutiny with his fingers white against his upper arms.

She exhaled a spiteful little laugh. “No underwear, hmm? Must be convenient for that nice man out there.” The woman trailed a tapered nail under Will’s chin, and he jerked away. “Does he take care of you sweetie? Fuck you and then take you shopping?”

Will felt the tears, and he hated himself for it. She grabbed the nearest garment and handed it to Will. He put it on, his eyes stinging, and fixed his eyes over the woman’s shoulder as she watched him struggle with the buttons on the shirt. When he had finished, she handed him the pants, finally giving in and helping him with the buckle.

“Let’s go show your sugar daddy, ok sweetie?”

Will trudged out of the room, his fists clenched at his sides. The woman helped him up on the pedestal, and Hannibal stood from where he had sat cross-legged on a velvet settee. Hannibal's smile faded as he took in the boy's tear-stained face, his rigid posture.

"Will?  What's wrong?"

Will bit his lip, stubbornly wiping the tears that wouldn't stop flowing. He lowered his head, trying to avoid Hannibal's gaze.

Hannibal swiped a thumb at the tears, his hand curling around Will's jaw. "Tell me," he said quietly. "You have to speak up for yourself."

Will took a deep breath, steeling his nerves. "She was talking about you," Will muttered quietly. "In a bad way."

Hannibal cocked an eyebrow, his lips pursed. "And you didn't like that," Hannibal stated matter-of-factly.

"N-no, Hannibal," Will almost whispered. Then he raised his chin in defiance. "I'd like to leave now."

Hannibal smiled, then turned to the woman who was standing nearby, her mouth agape. "Bring his clothes," Hannibal said, the note of authority unmistakable in his voice. "He'll wear this out."

The woman hurried to comply, rushing through the velvet curtain and returning with Will's clothes. She put them in a shopping bag and handed them to Hannibal.

Hannibal led Will toward the exit, looking back to the stunned owner with a wry smile on his face. "We won't be back."

Back in the Bentley, Will visibly relaxed. Hannibal had settled behind the wheel and started the engine before Will finally spoke.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly.

Hannibal smiled. "For taking up for me?" He patted Will's knee. "I would've done the same for you," Hannibal told Will. "Don't ever apologize for taking a stand."

Will smiled, settling further into the seat. "Where to now, Hannibal?"

Hannibal pretended to contemplate the question. "A haircut, I think."

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When they returned home, it took two trips for them to gather all the packages from the trunk. Hannibal had bought Will toiletries and a new laptop installed with literacy programs, and also some necessities like underwear and tee shirts. As far as his main wardrobe, however, Hannibal had arranged for his tailor to make a house call.

Will's new haircut was quite fetching. It was still long enough to accommodate his charming curls, but now it was shaped and styled where it would frame his face and not be in his way.

Will was appreciative of all of his things, Hannibal knew, but he was quite taken with the laptop. He was incredibly sharp and an obvious quick study. After Hannibal helped him with the initial setup, Will was hungrily absorbing as much from the literacy programs as he could in one sitting. While he was enthralled with laptop, Hannibal took the opportunity to put away his things and call his tailor.

While making dinner, Hannibal took the liberty to observe Will hunched over the laptop, his freshly cut hair curling over his forehead. He was beautiful where he sat, completely absorbed in his studies. He would need his help, of course, but the laptop would prove an invaluable tool in stimulating Will's mind.

And Hannibal would have him stimulated, rather than see him wither, his shrewd mind stagnant from a life of servitude.

Hannibal only called Will when it was time to eat, allowing him as much time as he wanted to experiment with and explore his new tool. The clothes he'd worn out of the boutique were adequate, a simple dress shirt and slacks, but they didn't quite capture Will's beauty like a properly tailored suit would. And besides, that woman had been impossibly rude. Another addition to his rolodex, no doubt.

It pleased Hannibal that Will had taken offense on Hannibal's behalf. He hoped in the future he would need less coaching in order to speak up for himself. Hannibal would have him independent, fiery even, or not at all.

Dinner was a pleasant affair. Hannibal took care not to overwhelm Will with etiquette and protocol, but he did instruct him on which forks were appropriate for which courses. Will enjoyed the veal cutlet with fervor, tempering his amorous little noises as he became more self-aware.

After dinner, Will asked if he could go back to the laptop, and Hannibal acquiesced. He pressed his lips to the crown of his head, advising him not to stay up too late, and made his way upstairs.

In the morning, Will was not in his room. Hannibal made his way downstairs, and sure enough, his Will was fast asleep over the keyboard, face pressed into his folded arms. It was endearing, if not frustrating.

"Temperance, dear Will," Hannibal said, his voice rough before his morning coffee. He let his fingers fall into Will's hair, jolting the boy awake. Will blinked rapidly up at Hannibal, then stiffened when he realized where he had slept.

"I didn't mean to," he said, already shutting the laptop. "I was just—"

Hannibal smiled, and Will visibly relaxed. "It's alright Will. Knowledge is a wonderful pursuit. But you also need your rest. Come, let's discuss what you've learned."

Will followed Hannibal to the kitchen island, where Hannibal started the coffee. He handed Will a cup and, sipping from his own, looked at Will over the rim.

Will took a swig of the steaming liquid, and it brought color to his cheeks. “I don’t understand a lot of it,” he began, “but I memorized all the letters and the sounds they make. The programs are like a game, so it makes it easier to learn.” He gave a timid smile, his eyes bright. “And it’s fun to play.”

“I will help you too, of course,” Hannibal said. “I want to see you thrive Will. And you will.”

Will blushed, and the color was lovely on him. Hannibal tied on an apron, then passed one to Will. “Help me this morning,” he intoned quietly, and Will nodded eagerly.

They cooked together in companionable silence. Hannibal found Will quite capable in the kitchen, good with a knife and adept at putting together ingredients and in the correct order. Hannibal complimented him often, if only to keep his cheeks flushed and his eyes sparkling with good humor.

After breakfast, they both went upstairs to get ready for the day. Hannibal had work, and while he was loathe to leave Will again, he felt more confident that they had a better understanding and that Will wouldn’t get into too much trouble.

Hannibal showered and dressed, and was pleased to hear Will doing the same. He wore one of his favorite suits, a blue striped suit with a maroon paisley tie, and made his way downstairs.

Will had paired one of Hannibal’s sweaters with a pair of his lounge pants, skin pink from the shower and his hair damp. He was sat at his laptop, but stood as Hannibal approached. Hannibal leaned into him, the heat from his skin still evident from the hot water Will enjoyed so much, and pressed his lips to his forehead.

“I’ll be home later,” Hannibal said with a sigh. Will smelled warm and clean, his natural scent perfuming his dewy skin. “Be good.”

Will looked up at Hannibal with a crooked grin. “Yes, Hannibal. Have a good day at work.”

Hannibal smiled, amused. He made a pointed glance at the laptop, then at Will. “You too,” he said.

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# Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will cooks, the tailor visits, and Hannibal takes Will on an outing.

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone for your support. I hope you enjoy! :)

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The ride home from the office made Hannibal think of Will, of the first time they rode home from Carlos's shop. He had come so far in such a short time, and Hannibal couldn't wait to see him bloom into the man he was meant to be.

He pulled up to the curb in front of the house, the windows warm with light. He exited and made his way up the stone path to his home and unlocked the door.

Will was there, his hair in disarray and a bright smile on his face. There was a smudge of flour on his cheek, and even more on his apron. He ushered Hannibal inside, then pressed his body to him in a small hug.

Hannibal relished his warmth, not caring how the residual flour on Will's apron was probably ruining his suit. He clutched Will in a soft embrace and pressed his lips to the crown of curls atop Will's head.

When he withdrew, Hannibal had a wry look on his face. "I thought I said no trouble?"

Will shook his head, his smile still bright. "No trouble Hannibal." Then, his old shyness returned. "I made dinner."

He was worrying his bottom lip with his teeth, unsure of what the older man would say. Hannibal just smiled, the points of his teeth showing, and reached up to brush away the flour from Will's cheek with the pad of his thumb.

"Perhaps you should show me what you have prepared for us."

Hannibal allowed himself to be led inside, humored as Will took his briefcase and overcoat. Will led them to the warmth of the kitchen, the various smells permeating the air and teasing Hannibal's appetite.

Despite Will's apron, Will had apparently been tidy with his cooking, as there was nothing on the pristine countertops but a dull shine from the overhead lamps. Hannibal felt a twinge of fondness, and tested the air with his sensitive nose.

"Fried chicken," he deduced, "With…mashed potatoes and gravy and green peas?"

Will's smile broadened. "And biscuits!" he chimed in. "But dessert is a surprise."

Will took off the apron and hung it beside Hannibal's. He looked suddenly very bashful. "Will you pick a wine, Hannibal? I don't know much about wine."

"It would be my pleasure," Hannibal bowed, and made his way to the wine cellar. He made the appropriate pairing and set it on the dining room to rest. Will was plating their dinner, so he made his way to the dining room to wait. The soft smile on his face had not withered since he'd arrived home; he found Will cooking for them entirely endearing.

Will entered with their plates, a proud smile on his face. He did not present them with the sort of flourish that Hannibal usually did, but it was pleasing nonetheless.

Hannibal poured their wine, and indeed the light pairing went well with the hearty meal. The menu made Hannibal all the more curious about Will's background. Will had prepared food with a distinct Southern flair.

"Where were you born, Will?"

Will trailed his fork through his mashed potatoes, looking wistful. "Louisiana," he mumbled. "My dad taught me how to cook." His voice lowered to a soft rumble. "That was after my mom died."

Hannibal hummed, digesting the information. The chicken was cooked well, light and crisp and flavorful. There was a bit of cayenne in the breading which spoke of Will's Cajun upbringing.

"And after that?"

Will pressed his lips together as if it hurt him to say the words. It probably did, Hannibal realized, but he needed to know. Will needed to say it.

"Daddy sold me," He whispered, slipping into a forgotten drawl. "Times got hard. He got less and less work at the docks. He said he couldn't afford to keep me."

Will looked up, tears threatening to spill over his thick lashes, and Hannibal reached for his hand. He squeezed gently, reassuringly, and Will dipped his head.

"This is delicious Will," Hannibal said, wanting to change the subject. "I believe you mentioned something about a surprise dessert?"

Will's mouth quirked, and he blinked away the tears. "I'll be right back," he said, his mood still morose but he was no longer crying.

Hannibal sat in silence, ruminating over how betrayed Will had to have felt to be sold by his own father. It was one thing to be bred as a slave, but slavery wasn't Will's birthright. He was once a young boy with hopes and dreams for the future. But those dreams had been ground out of him by the oppressive plight of poverty. Hannibal found himself frowning. He would do better by Will. He had to.

Will returned to the dining room with two dessert cups in tow. Will smiled, his mood lightening in his hope to impress Hannibal. "Peach cobbler with ice cream," Will said proudly. "It was my dad's recipe."

They tucked into their desserts and indeed the cobbler was delightful, the warmth and spice contrasting perfectly with the ice cream. Hannibal cracked the top of the crust with his spoon, pleased to have discovered his little Will could cook so well and seemed to have a true passion for it. He looked forward to many hours with him side by side in the kitchen.

After dinner, they settled on the couch in the study. Hannibal had chosen a book, *Gulliver's Travels*, and Will was pressed against him shoulder to shoulder so he could look at the illustrations.

The fire licked warmly over Will's soft features, making him all the more beautiful. Despite this he looked tired, burdened by his previous revelations. Hannibal rubbed a hand down his arm and pulled him close.

"I'm very proud of you Will," he spoke into his ear. "It took a lot of strength to tell me what you did."

Will sighed, his head falling on Hannibal's shoulder.

"And dinner was wonderful."

Will made a little sound of contentment, a soft mew of happiness. He had drawn up his legs to curl under him on the couch, and most of his weight lay on Hannibal's shoulder.

Hannibal wrapped his arm around him, holding the book between them. He began to read, his voice a softly accented cadence in the warm room. After a while Will became heavy in his arms, and Hannibal could hear his breathing even out.

Hannibal closed the book on his lap, simply content to hold Will in front of the fire. He trailed his fingertips up and down his arms, delighting in the gooseflesh his touch elicited even in sleep.

After Hannibal had finished his brandy, he gently gathered Will in his arms and held him close. Will's chin was tucked against his chest, and Hannibal made his way upstairs where he gingerly placed Will beneath the covers.

For a moment, Hannibal stood there in the low light of the room and watched Will sleep. He was quite smitten, he realized, and it didn't alarm him as he thought it might. He embraced the little flutter of his heart as he stared at him, the weightless, giddy feeling that raced through him at the mere sight of Will's sleeping form.

Finally, Hannibal closed the door and made his way to his own bedroom. He dressed for bed, feeling warmer and more relaxed than he had in ages. He slipped beneath the covers and sleep finally found him. His last thoughts, as he drifted off to sleep, were of Will.

In the morning, Will was still in his bed, tucked sweetly beneath the sheets. Hannibal hummed, bouncing lightly down the stairs and eager to start breakfast. Upstairs, he heard the shower turn on, and smiled to himself. Will loved keeping clean, and it made Hannibal sad to know he wasn't always allowed access to proper hygiene.

Will rounded the corner toward the kitchen just as Hannibal was plating their breakfast. He was wearing a red sweater of Hannibal's and his borrowed lounge pants, and his wet hair was curling around his face.

The sweater hung tantalizingly off of one shoulder, and Hannibal couldn't stop himself from eyeing where the creamy skin peeked out from the collar. Will bounded up to him, a sleepy smile on his face.

"Hey," he said, his voice husky with sleep. He hesitated only a moment before wrapping his arms around Hannibal's waist.

Hannibal's hand found the small of his back as if it belonged there, and he nuzzled his curls. "Good morning," he rumbled. "Are you hungry?"

Will withdrew, his eyes bright. "Very."

"Good to hear," Hannibal said with a smile, and handed him his plate. They carried both to the dining room, where Hannibal poured them juice and coffee.

Hannibal had prepared them omelets and fruit, and there were fresh-baked muffins in a basket on the table. The usual odd centerpiece was absent, creating a much more casual atmosphere.

"Mr. Cassini is coming by today," Hannibal said around a bite of food. "He's going to get your clothing situation sorted out."

Will scrunched up his face briefly before spearing a piece of melon. "But I like wearing your things."

Hannibal smiled. "You can still do that…sometimes," he allowed. "But you must have clothing of your own. Nice things to wear out."

Will frowned. "The last time we went shopping—"

"This won't be like that," Hannibal reassured him. "Mr. Cassini is a consummate professional. He's made my clothes for years." Hannibal took a sip of juice. "Trust me Will, you're in good hands."

Will still moped a bit, obviously thinking of the experience he'd had in the boutique.

"Besides," Hannibal said casually, "I've taken the day off."

Will brightened immediately, smiling around bites of food. “So you’ll be here when Mr. Cassini comes?”

Hannibal nodded. “Indeed I will. I have a vested interest in what you’ll be wearing. Especially when we go to the symphony.”

Will dropped his fork, his mouth agape. “The symphony? When?”

“Next month,” Hannibal revealed, “I already have the tickets.”

Will stood and all but fell into Hannibal’s arms. He placed a chaste kiss to Hannibal’s cheek, and Hannibal felt his heart leap.

Hannibal hummed, the spot on his cheek still burning from the touch. “Now you know why you must be good for Mr. Cassini,” he said as he patted Will’s back. “You won’t complain too much, will you?”

Will shook his head, curls bouncing with the motion. “I won’t say a word,” he vowed, beaming.

Hannibal hugged him close, smiling.

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Mr. Cassini was an elderly man with a stately appearance despite his stooped shoulders. He had a bright swath of white hair and carried a leather satchel. He wore a suit, finely cut in various shades of black, and an antique pocket watch and chain that hung from his waistcoat.

Mr. Cassini bade Will stand on a stool in the study, and he spent some time measuring and assessing Will’s body, occasionally stopping to write a figure on his hand before continuing.

“He’ll need a suit,” Hannibal said. “Quite a few, but one by next month, for sure.”

The elderly gentleman stopped what he was doing to look at Hannibal, his eyebrows raised. “Next month?” he exclaimed. “That will put us in a rush.”

Hannibal nodded. “That is quite alright Mr. Cassini. I know you will do your best to give our dear Will what he needs. Also, have your personal shoppers pick up these items and deliver them later today. He needs several pairs of shoes, pajamas…that sort.” Hannibal handed Mr. Cassini a list and he pocketed it without a glance.

Mr. Cassini grunted his gruff affirmation and continued his measurements, all under the watchful eye of Hannibal. Occasionally Will would catch Hannibal’s eye and smile, and Hannibal couldn’t help but return it.

When the older gentleman was gone, Hannibal spent some time working with Will on his laptop. He was surprised by how much he had learned already, and delighted in hearing Will read back what was on the screen.

Around noon, Hannibal closed the laptop and bid Will get dressed. He had one outfit from the boutique, but his other items would not be ready for a couple of days. Between Hannibal's closet and what little Hannibal had bought him already, they would get by.

Predictably, Will came bounding down the steps in the same outfit from the boutique, and although it was casual and sharp and complimented Will's natural beauty, Hannibal would be glad when the rest of his things were ready.

Will blinked up at him, standing on the toes of his newly purchased shoes. "Are we going somewhere?"

Hannibal grasped Will by the shoulders, enjoying the feel of the his warmth beneath his fingers. "Yes," he said gently. "I thought, perhaps, since I have the day off, we might have a picnic."

Will's face lit immediately. "I can help you make the sandwiches!" he said, beaming.

Hannibal chuckled as Will ran off to the kitchen, excitedly withdrawing items from the fridge, fresh fruit from breakfast, some cheeses and sliced meats. Hannibal leaned over him as he worked. "Not too much, lest the ants have to deal with the leftovers."

"There will be enough to feed them too," Will boasted, and Hannibal went off to get the basket. When he returned, he placed it on the countertop and Will began to fill it.

"Have you ever been on a picnic before, Will?"

Will sobered, his lips pressed into a firm line. He finally nodded. "I did…with my old master and his wife."

Hannibal immediately regretted asking.

"I fixed the basket then too, but I wasn't allowed to eat anything. And I didn't have nice clothes like this, either." Will bit his lip. "It was nice to be outside though."

Hannibal leaned over the counter and touched the side of Will's face. The touch became a caress, and Will closed his eyes.

"You'll never miss another picnic," Hannibal vowed. "You'll never want for food, or clothes, or company ever again. I promise."

Will never opened his eyes, but he leaned into Hannibal's palm and sighed.

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The park was bustling with activity—kids flying kites, couples lounging on blankets under the trees, and a group of teenagers playing an impromptu game of softball. There were slaves there too, but not many. Some were naked, but others were clothed as they waited on their masters. Some even had young charges and oversaw their childhood games.

Hannibal grabbed Will's hand, directing his attention away from the slaves. Will looked all the same, a vacant sort of understanding lighting his eyes.

They found an oak tree on a little hill, some ways away from all of the park's activity. Hannibal spread a blanket on the grass and set the basket down. Hannibal sat down and pulled Will into his lap.

"Let me spoil you," he whispered, feeding Will a plump grape. "Let me treat you like the jewel that you are."

Will's eyes glanced in the direction of the slaves, happy in their station and looking after their charges. "I'm no jewel," he muttered. "I am what I am."

Hannibal kissed him then, a soft press of his lips to Will's. "You are perfect," Hannibal intoned, "and you are mine."

Will smiled, his breath still caught from the kiss. "Yours," he exhaled, and pressed into the heat of his mouth.

There was nothing chaste about the way Will took charge of the kiss, probing the seam of Hannibal's mouth to explore the depths, warm and slick. One of them moaned, and Hannibal had to brace himself to keep them upright.

Hannibal pulled away, greedy for oxygen. "The ants really will have our lunch if we don't eat it now," he said, his voice pleasantly rough.

Will smiled softly as he gazed after Hannibal. "I'm not worried," he said, and it seemed loaded and full of meaning.

After the picnic they walked hand in hand near the pond, dodging and laughing as the ducks confirmed they had gotten too close to their nesting grounds. Up ahead, a woman was playing catch with her dog, and Will became infatuated.

"Do you think…I could pet her?" Will asked timidly. He still held Hannibal's hand, and Hannibal marveled at how well his slightly smaller one fit inside his.

"We will have to ask," Hannibal said. As they drew nearer on the walking path, they didn't have to. The dog, a beautiful golden retriever with shining locks bounded toward Will, knocking him to the ground. The dog lathed his face with his warm tongue as Will's laughter rang through the park.

"Oh my, I'm so sorry!" The woman apologized. "Sadie never does that. She's usually so well behaved."

Hannibal assured the woman that it was no problem. Will had managed to right himself by now, and he was knelt petting the friendly dog with a sort of childlike enthusiasm.

"She's beautiful," Will said to the woman. He looked at Hannibal then, who was smiling down on him.

“I’m sorry she knocked you down like that,” the woman said.  She had a soft smile and quick eyes that seemed aware of everything.

Will nodded.  “It’s fine. I’m glad I got to meet her.”

The dog followed her master off for another game of catch, but Hannibal did not miss the wistful gaze Will spared the departing animal. Perhaps one day, he might gift Will a dog, he thought.

The sun was setting as they walked back to the car, basket in tow. It was a short drive home, and Will was quiet until they pulled into the driveway.

“Thank you for today, Hannibal. I haven’t had a day like that in a very long time.”

Hannibal took his hand from where it rested in his lap and raised it to his lips. “May we have many more days ahead of us.”

Will blushed, and Hannibal loved to see it. They exited the car to find several boxes stacked on the steps. Hannibal checked the labels, and indeed it was the shopping delivery from Mr. Cassini’s staff. Will helped him get the boxes inside and Will began opening them, one by one.

There were blue jeans and shoes, socks and underwear, casual shirts, pants and pajamas. There was even an array of fashionable cuff bracelets for Will to consider should he choose to hide his scars. Will looked overwhelmed by it all.

“Is all of this for me?”

Hannibal helped Will off of the floor and pulled him close. “Indeed it is my dear. It’s all for you. Things you need that you didn’t have.”

“I’ve never had so much in all my life,” he whispered. His eyes welled with tears, and he hid his face in Hannibal’s shoulder.

Hannibal embraced him, smoothing a hand through his hair in comfort. “Come,” Hannibal intoned gently, “let’s practice your reading before bed, shall we? You can tell me what signs you saw at the park and what they meant.”

Will pulled away, smiling. “Don’t feed the ducks, for one” he said, hiding a smile.

Hannibal saw through his coyness immediately. “And did you?”

Will pursed his lips. “Only a bit of bread,” he said with a shake of his head.

Hannibal smiled. “And what else?”

“Keep all pets on a leash,” Will recited, his tongue resting on his top lip thoughtfully. “And keep off the grass, which we did not do.”

Hannibal smoothed his hair away from his face. “Some rules were meant to be broken, especially when the weather is nice.”

Will hummed thoughtfully, then his stomach growled.

“Sounds like someone is ready for dinner. Shall you help me in the kitchen?”

---

Dinner was a pleasant affair. Will insisted on changing into some of his new clothes, a dark wash pair of blue jeans and a red polo shirt. He looked fetching in such casual attire, Hannibal thought, and he could scarcely wait to see him in a suit.

After dinner, Will began to yawn. Hannibal walked him to his room, stopping in the doorway where Will’s lamp was already on beside his bed. Will hugged him tightly, murmuring goodnight against his neck, his lips pressed against Hannibal’s warm flesh.

Hannibal felt bereft once Will had gone into his room, but also full. He would have to take more days off, he decided, if it meant spending them with Will. He dressed for bed and soon fell into a dreamless sleep.

In the middle of the night, however, Hannibal awoke with a start. There was a shadow in his doorway, and he raised up on his elbows to get a better look.

He turned on the lamp, hair mussed from sleep, to find Will standing by his bed. He was wearing one of Hannibal’s sweaters, not his new pajamas, and he was blinking sleep from his eyes.

“Will? Did you have a bad dream?”

Will shook his head. He was folding his hands under the sweater cuffs, and the nervous action made him look small.

“Would you like to sleep with me Will?” Hannibal couldn’t imagine what brought him to his bedside, but he wasn’t going to turn him away without comfort.

Will seemed to notice that Hannibal was shirtless, and his eyes traveled down Hannibal’s chest in fascination.  Hesitantly, he pressed his knee into the bed and, feeling it dip, rolled the rest of the way onto the mattress and into Hannibal.

He pressed himself against Hannibal where he lay on his back, a hand going to rest in the silvery-blond chest hair there, feeling the steady thrum of his heart. Hannibal lay very still, letting Will do as he would. He felt Will tuck his chin into his shoulder and then, after long moments, the feathery breath of him fast asleep. Hannibal gently grabbed the hand that lay on his chest and followed him soon after.

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# Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal go to the symphony.

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Weeks passed. Will grew in knowledge and in grace, reading everything in Hannibal's library and then convincing Hannibal to take him to the Baltimore Public Branch on occasion. They played chess in the evenings, and dined on rich food that Will helped Hannibal prepare. Will was very inquisitive, often asking questions that gave Hannibal pause, or caused him to seek out the answers.

Will gained weight and muscle mass, filling out his clothes so that his ribs no longer shown, nor were the pearls of his spine so prominent when Hannibal hugged him close.

And Hannibal loved him.

---

The leaves were finally turning after a brief but beautiful summer, and Will could scarcely get enough of being outside.

He was reading in the garden when Hannibal appeared in the doorway, a placid smile on his face.

"Do you know what tonight is, darling Will? Or have you forgotten?"

Will appeared pensive; very little escaped his steel-trap mind, but whatever Hannibal had planned for tonight was unknown to him.

Hannibal walked out into the garden, admiring Will where he sat on the bench. The newly-turned trees provided a beautiful backdrop for the sanguine shirt he wore, and the grey dress slacks that, despite his best efforts, he had managed not to wrinkle. His legs were crossed at the ankle, and a book was open in his lap.

"The symphony," Hannibal reminded him. "They're featuring Vivaldi."

Hannibal caught his eyes, quickly becoming lost in the blue depths. "Had you forgotten?"

Will stood, the book sliding from his lap, and wrapped his arms around Hannibal's neck. Confidence made him stand a little taller now, but he still had to go up on his toes to be even with Hannibal. "Yes, I suppose I had," he confessed, sunlight skating over his profile like in a

Caravaggio painting. He pressed his lips to Hannibal's, humming. "Thank you for reminding me."

Although Will had a greater appreciation for all genres of music now, Vivaldi had a special place in his heart. It was the first composer Will recognized as something pleasing, and had quickly become his favorite.

Will grabbed Will's hand, his book forgotten, and pulled Hannibal along the path. "When do we leave? How long will we stay? Who else are they featuring?"

Hannibal chuckled, running his thumb along the top of Will's hand where they were pressed together. "Patience, my Will. First, come have coffee with me. I have to be off to work soon."

Hannibal let Will make the coffee, and of course he knew just how he liked it. They discussed politics (Will's lease favorite topic) and philosophy (his most favorite) and Will's first opportunity to wear his new suit.

Will walked Hannibal to the door, reluctant as always to let him go. Hannibal pressed a kiss to the top of his head, lingering long enough for Will's curls to tickle his nose.

"I wish you didn't have to go," Will bemoaned softly.

"It's only a few sessions today," Hannibal assured him. "I'll be home before you know it." He smiled. "And then we have the symphony."

Will squeezed his hand and let him go, turning back inside to choose another book from Hannibal's shelves.

---

Work was dull. Franklyn was worse, insipid and whining. Hannibal's professional veneer was impeccable, of course, his face blank, his eyes fixed on the man before him in vague interest.

"I'm really excited for the symphony tonight," Franklyn dithered, the first thing he'd said of any interest to Hannibal. "I'm going with my friend Tobias."

Hannibal nodded. "This is your friend with the string shop, correct?"

Franklyn brightened and vibrated in his seat with even more ferocity. "That's the one," he affirmed. "Although I'm not sure that he likes me as much as I like him." Franklyn chewed his lip. "Do you think he likes me Dr. Lecter?"

Hannibal quirked his mouth. "I am sure he does, Franklyn."

Hannibal discreetly glanced at the clock on the wall behind Franklyn.

"It looks like our time is up."

Franklyn deflated, obviously having not gotten what he wanted, whatever that may have been, from the session. But Hannibal found Franklyn always behaved this way and didn't

dwell too deeply on it.

“Will you be at the symphony tonight, Dr. Lecter? I know you are a member.”

Hannibal gently steered Franklyn through the patient exit, artfully dodging the question. “Enjoy yourself tonight,” Hannibal said instead. Franklyn was still talking as he closed the door.

Hannibal sighed deeply. He missed Will and wondered what he was up to. Will needed a cell phone so he could message him throughout the day, and he chastised himself that he hadn’t thought of such earlier.

Upon returning home, he found Will in the master bathroom, lounging in the tub. Bubbles covered the surface of the water, and the air was humid with the smell of soap and rosehips.

Will was resplendent.

His hair lay in a dark crown, floating at the ends where it fell into the water. His cheeks were ruddy from the heat, a stark contrast to the creamy skin that shown in patches through the bubbles. Hannibal propped his hip on the edge of the tub and skimmed a hand along the surface of the water.

“Getting ready so soon?”

Will smiled languidly, his eyes half-lidded in relaxed pleasure. “It’s not so early. You were late coming home.”

Indeed, they had less than two hours until the symphony. Hannibal’s stop for a cell phone had taken longer than expected.

Hannibal grabbed Will’s hand from beneath the water, watching in fascination as the suds slipped down his smooth skin. “I’m sorry I kept you waiting, my love.”

Will lay the soapy hand on Hannibal’s thigh, unbothered by Hannibal’s suit. He gave a gentle squeeze.

“You should shower. With all of your layers it will take you an hour to dress, at least,” Will teased.

Hannibal skated his hand through the water, playfully splashing Will in the face. “Certainly not an hour.”

Will smiled, sliding further into the tub. Luxury suited him, Hannibal thought fondly.

He picked up the hand on his thigh and brought it to his lips. “I’ll leave you to your bath, dearest.”

Hannibal retreated, listening to Will’s humming amid gentle sloshes of water. He lay his clothes out on the bed alongside Will’s suit and retreated to the guest bathroom.

He was dressed and ready by the time Will came out of the master bath. He was wearing nothing but a towel, his hairless chest dewy and flushed, his hair damp and curling around his face. He sauntered toward Hannibal with intent burning in his eyes.

Hannibal met him halfway, his arms going up to grasp his damp shoulders, his nose nudging his jawline, breathing in his warmth and scent.

“Do you have any idea what you do to me?” Hannibal intoned lowly, pausing to press his lips to the sensitive skin beneath Will’s ear.

Will stretched to give him better access, his breath catching in his throat. “Yes,” he breathed, “the same thing you do to me.”

Hannibal growled, his teeth grazing Will’s neck. “We’ll be late,” he muttered against Will’s damp skin. He flicked his tongue out to test the warm flesh there, and Will gasped.

Hannibal forced himself to withdraw, gathering himself as best he could. “Go get dressed,” He said. “I want you on my arm tonight.” He smirked. “I want to show you off.”

Will smiled, the blush in his cheek no longer from the heat of the bath. He nodded, gathering the suit carefully and carrying it into his bedroom.

Will returned, fussing with his lapels as he stepped into the room. Hannibal’s intake of breath startled him, and he looked up to see Hannibal staring at him.

The suit was fitted to Will’s body perfectly. The cut and tailoring were impeccable, and the way the fabric draped and hugged Will’s natural shape only made him more appealing. The suit was so blue it was black, with lighter pinstripes highlighting the fabric that complimented Will’s coloring and eyes. The royal blue silk shirt underneath was a stark contrast to the ivory paisley tie, which was tied a little crookedly and in desperate need of attention.

Hannibal had his hands on him immediately, smoothing down his lapels and expertly tying the tie. Will had styled his hair, but it was still loose and springy when Hannibal plunged his hands into it.

For a moment they just shared each other’s space, noses brushing and breaths mingling. It was Will that lifted his face to his, lips parting in expectation.

Hannibal nipped teasingly at the corner of his mouth before diving in, greedily drinking his fill. Will groaned against him, kissing him back with fervor. Time seemed to slow, and they both parted, foreheads pressed and gasping.

“I have something for you,” Hannibal said, placing another peck on Will’s kiss swollen lips. “Something for tonight.”

Will’s eyes were ablaze, little spots of blush high on his cheekbones. Hannibal forcibly left him to go the dresser, returning with a little black box.

Will opened it, and two sparkling diamond cufflinks shown on the velvet. He smiled, offering up his wrist.

“You bought those for yourself,” he teased. “You want me to make you look good.”

Hannibal brought Will’s wrist to his mouth, pressing his lips there before scraping his teeth along a blue-green vein. “You already make me look good,” Hannibal murmured, working the sizeable jewel through the French cuffs of Will’s shirt. “This is just details.”

Will bit his lip, admiring the sparkling studs. Hannibal offered Will his arm, and he took it.

“Shall we go?”

---

The symphony hall was a modern structure that was, on the interior, accented in cream, gold, and red. Hannibal had a box, of course, so an ideal seat was assured.

Hannibal handed off the keys to the valet and stepped out onto the red carpet, Will by his side. He positively preened as the society pages’ paparazzi snapped photo after photo of beautiful Will on his arm. He could see the articles now, the scuttlebutt in tomorrow’s papers. He smiled demurely at the photographers; his Will was understandably a little flummoxed by all of the attention, but he adjusted quickly and glided down the red carpet as if he owned it.

Once inside, Hannibal nosed Will’s cheek. “You’re absolutely stunning tonight. I’m honored to have you on my arm.”

Will smiled, leaning into Hannibal. “You’re not so bad yourself,” he said coyly. “Would you like some champagne?”

Hannibal caught a passing server, grabbing two glasses and handing one to Will. The bubbles exploded on his tongue as he took a prim sip, watching Will do the same. The suit, his hair, those lips…Will was positively magnetic.

They mingled, Will following Hannibal’s expert lead. Hannibal spotted Franklyn before he could divert their path, and they were intercepted in moments.

“Dr. Lecter!” Franklyn effused. He was alongside a tall, smartly dressed man with dark skin. “It’s so wonderful to see you.” His manic eyes flicked to Will, giving him a cursory glance. “Who’s your little friend?”

Hannibal furrowed his brows, his mouth firm. He wrapped an arm around Will and pulled him close. “This is my partner, Will.”

A bright smile lit Will’s face at the word “partner,” and he dutifully offered his hand for Franklyn to shake. Franklyn did, almost robotically. His shoulders were stooped, his grip loose.

“Dr. Lecter,” Franklyn stammered, “I had no idea you—“

“Won’t you introduce us to your companion?” Hannibal interrupted, eager to end Franklyn’s line of questioning.

Franklyn’s eyes brightened. “Oh! Of course. This is Tobias Budge. Tobias, this is Dr. Lecter and his *partner* Will.”

Tobias smiled tightly, his eyes dark. Hannibal made their goodbyes and weaved their way through the crowd of finely dressed patrons. The house lights blinked once and Will tightened his grip on Hannibal’s arm; it was time to make their way to their seats.

Hannibal’s box at the symphony hall was as modern as the building, but the seats were plush and had an excellent view of the stage. Hannibal explained that it was also optimally placed for acoustic enjoyment, and proceeded to launch into a history of the hall and the symphony itself.

Will only smiled. A little thrill of anticipation traversed his spine. It had been such a magical night and it had barely begun.

The music began, a soft swell of strings rising up to the concave roof and resonating in the air. Will caught his breath, his eyes sparkling, and stole a glance of Hannibal.

Hannibal couldn’t take his eyes off of him. His perfect profile in the low lighting, the soft tremble of his shoulders, the light in his eyes. He was visibly affected by the music already, and Hannibal was moved not by the music, which was beautiful, but by Will’s mere presence. Hannibal squeezed his hand, leaning to press his shoulder against his.

They listened in silence. Hannibal watched Will intently, emotionally affected by how totally absorbed he was in the experience. This was the real symphony for Hannibal, experiencing the micro expressions of Will’s enjoyment—the little hitches in his breath, the soft rise and fall of his chest in time with the music.

It was over in a blink, and they both rose to their feet in applause. Will clapped hardily, tears in his eyes. Hannibal had never seen someone so beautiful.

He caught Will’s arm, drawing him into a warm embrace. Hannibal held him gently, feeling Will sigh against him. He was obviously overwhelmed.

“Thank you so much for tonight, Hannibal.”

---

Will was pensive on the way to the restaurant. Hannibal caught him humming some of the music from the evening, and he smiled to himself.

“Did you mean it?” Will asked at last, watching the rain spatter against the windshield. “That I’m your partner?”

Hannibal swallowed, stealing a glance at Will. “I meant every word,” He said at last. “You’re my partner Will. In every way.”

Will swallowed, looking out into the passing streetlights flashing in the dark. “Not officially,” he said almost bitterly. “Officially I’m…something else.”

It threw Hannibal. Did Will really not know how he felt about him? He cleared his throat. “Not officially,” he said carefully. “But in truth. And truth is all that matters.”

He reached over and grabbed Will’s hand, squeezing until he felt the warmth return to the cool fingers resting on Will’s thigh.

---

The restaurant was upscale, tastefully decorated with white cloths and touches of color. Tall windows looked out over the harbor where the twinkling lights from boats could be seen dotting the horizon.

The maître d' led them to a secluded alcove of the restaurant by one of the windows. The lights from the harbor played off Will’s face, and the soft ambient lighting of the restaurant made his eyes appear even more blue than usual.

“Have I told you how breathtaking you are tonight Will?” Hannibal inquired, snaking his hand across the fine tablecloth to hold Will’s. “I am completely besotted with you.”

Will smiled, lifting Hannibal’s hand to his lips where he placed a chaste kiss there. “Many times, Hannibal. You are nothing if not generous with your praise.”

Hannibal narrowed his eyes, turning Will’s hand over and caressing his wrist. “I would have you praise me more, for many things.”

To Hannibal’s delight Will blushed, and in the soft lighting he looked like a Renaissance painting.

The server arrived and Will ordered for himself—in Italian, a language he and Hannibal had been working on. Hannibal made the wine selection, and then the server left them in relative privacy.

Will sipped his glass of water, looking over the modest centerpiece to trace the sharp planes of Hannibal’s cheekbones with his eyes. “The symphony was remarkable tonight,” he intoned quietly. It was still raining, and a kaleidoscope of shadow and shade smeared the window where they sat, refracting the light.

“Indeed it was,” Hannibal answered. “We shall go again. And to the opera as well. I want to show you off to as many people as I can.”

Will laughed, abashed, and the server arrived with their wine. “You never miss an opportunity to peacock for the public.”

“Only because of you Will. I’ve never had a reason before now.”

Will smiled, and they fell into a companionable silence as they sipped their wine. Their food arrived, steaming hot, rich and appetizing. Will took a bite and couldn’t contain the little

moan he emitted as the flavor bust on his tongue.

Hannibal just looked at him, licking his lips.

Will eyed him fondly and took another bite. "What are you thinking about?"

Hannibal reached across the table and caressed his face. "How I want to undo you," Hannibal said quietly. "How I want to work those sounds out of you like a musician works his instrument."

Will's cheeks burned, but his eyes were alight with desire. He quirked his mouth. "Let's eat and then let's get home," he said softly.

---

They tumbled through the door, half-drunk with desire. Hannibal walked Will back toward the stairs, methodically working his tie as he went. Their lips were fused, heat matching heat, as they nipped, bit, and lathed over the other in their passion.

Hannibal had one arm wrapped around the small of his back, and he slid his hand lower, lower still to clutch at the round globes of Will's ass. Will groaned, throwing his head back, and Hannibal took full advantage of the easy access to his neck by pressing his mouth there and sucking. There would be a bruise there tomorrow, high enough to show, and it pleased him.

They reached Hannibal's bedroom, a tangle of limbs and half-shed clothing. The back of Will's knees hit the bed and Hannibal pushed him down, dragging his suit coat down his arms where Will finished taking it off. Hannibal peppered Will's face with kisses, his hand firmly rooted in his curls.

"Let me give you what you need," Hannibal crooned, already working the buckle of Will's slacks. He could feel the hardness there, and it only encouraged him.

"You already do," Will whispered, his head inclined, lost in his pleasure.

"What you want then," Hannibal said as he pushed Will's slacks down below his knees. The underwear was next, and the wet, flushed head of Will's cock sprang free.

Hannibal dipped to lick the tip, tasting the salty bitterness of his arousal. Will gasped at the contact, his hips coming off the bed as if he'd been struck.

"You don't…you don't have to do that," Will finally managed, his breathing labored and his voice high with need. "No one's ever—"

Will locked eyes with him from where he knelt between his legs. Something about seeing Hannibal like that, on his knees, fully dressed and hair disheveled caused heat to pool low in his gut.

"But I want to," Hannibal said as he slipped his hand down to gently caress Will's balls. "I want to taste you. I want to give you everything."

Will groaned, his hands fisting the duvet. “Yesss,” he hissed as Hannibal licked a broad stripe to the underside of Will’s cock. He traced the vein there, and Will shivered. Finally, he took him into his mouth.

Will jerked, his hands flying to Hannibal’s hair. He clenched the tresses, guiding Hannibal down as he swallowed him whole.

Hannibal could feel his throat clench around Will, creating a tight channel for him to fuck into. Tears sprang in his eyes, an unconscious reaction to being used that way. He reveled in it. The tears, the drool accumulating and spilling from the corners of his stretched mouth all grounded him in the moment.

He withdrew, sucking hard on Will’s cock, feeling him tremble above him, and then plunged back down again. His nose nested in his curls, and he caught Will’s bright, musky scent flooding his senses.

Hannibal’s cock was rock hard, but he ignored it. This was about Will, so he gripped his thighs tightly as he encouraged will to fuck up into his mouth. A few more passes and Will grunted, clutching Hannibal’s hair tightly and finally moving his hips. He fucked into Hannibal’s throat with abandon, and Hannibal fought the intrusion by willfully relaxing his throat, opening his eyes to stare up through tear-laden lashes at his beautiful boy completely losing himself to the moment.

He was perfect.

Hannibal let himself be used, sucking and teasing as best he could to aid in Will’s release. He could tell Will was close; his thighs shook and his strokes became quick, uneven little thrusts.

Through it all, Will was making the most beautiful sounds…sounds of ecstasy and abandon…wonderful little grunts and moans and sharp cries.

Hannibal’s knees ached, but the view was more breathtaking than any sunset he had ever seen. Will, with high dots of color on his cheeks, his mouth agape, his eyes shut tight. Hannibal could feel the wiry tension in Will’s body, the furious jerk of his hips as he chased is own release.

“Hannibal!” Will cried, a warning perhaps but Hannibal just sucked harder, impatient to taste him.

Above him Will shook apart, crying out as he came down Hannibal’s throat. Hannibal swallowed him all, sucking, licking and teasing him with the edge of his teeth until he was crying from overstimulation.

Will collapsed on the bed, loose and completely blissed out. Hannibal crawled over him, pulling him up onto a pillow and removing the rest of his clothes for him. Reclining on the bed, Hannibal still fully dressed and Will now completely nude, Will nuzzled against his chest. “Too many layers,” he mumbled.

“Perhaps you’re right,” Hannibal said hoarsely, his throat completely ruined. Hannibal undressed and slipped beneath the covers with Will. Will immediately came to him, his arm going over his chest as Hannibal simply held him. Within moments, they were both asleep.

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# Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone who's followed this story. I hope you enjoy the conclusion! <3

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Hannibal blinked awake, his limbs tangled in Will's. The warm body pressed against his was lax in sleep, smooth and fit perfectly to his.

Ruefully Hannibal disentangled himself from Will's sleeping form, casting one last look at him before heading off to shower. When he emerged, the bed was made and Will was nowhere to be found.

He attuned his ears to the rest of the house, hearing classical music coming from the kitchen. Will was humming along, busy with some unknown activity. It made Hannibal smile.

He dressed quickly in a light blue striped suit with a cream-colored tie. He had scarcely enough time to prepare breakfast for them both, he thought, but they'd slept in. It was entirely worth it.

Hannibal made his way downstairs, rounding into the kitchen. Will was at the stove, pouring out a perfectly thin crepe batter onto the griddle. He was in his pajama bottoms and bare feet, and had a beatific smile on his face.

"Hi," he said almost shyly, handing Hannibal a plate garnished with fresh fruit and stacked with delicate crepes. "I made you breakfast."

Hannibal placed the plate on the bar and pulled Will to him. "I can see that," he said against his mouth. He smelled positively divine, like sleep and sex. He nosed Will's hair before kissing him leisurely, his hands toying with the waistband of his pants before slipping down to cup his backside.

"Come," Will said, his eyes sparkling. "It'll get cold."

Hannibal let Will pull him around to the kitchen island where his breakfast lay waiting. Will watched as Hannibal cut into the stack of crepes, humming appreciatively around the sweet fluffy treat. "Delicious, dear Will. I can't thank you enough."

Will smiled, then stretched his lithe body in a patch of sun from the kitchen window. "You might can," Will said coyly, and Hannibal tracked his body with his eyes.

“I have something for you,” Hannibal suddenly remembered. He finished his breakfast and then went to his desk in the study and withdrew a cell phone.

“For when we’re apart,” Hannibal said simply. “My number is already programmed, plus some apps you might find useful. Feel free to download more.”

Will smiled, hugging Hannibal tightly. “I’ll call you all the time,” he vowed, and Hannibal pressed a kiss to his curls.

“Sometimes I won’t be able to answer, but I’ll always call you back.”

Will seemed please, and was preoccupied with his new toy as Hannibal made his way to the front door. Hannibal’s cellphone dinged, and he looked down to find a message from a number he knew to be Will’s.

*Have a good day at work. I’ll miss you.*

Hannibal chuckled, shaking his head as he walked toward the Bentley.

---

Mrs. Burtram was talking (with regret) about her failed first marriage when Hannibal felt his phone buzz in his pocket. Somehow he knew it was Will, and not being able to answer right away made Mrs. Burtram’s diatribe on the ill-fated marriage of her youth even more tedious.

At the end of their time he saw her out, shutting the door and immediately withdrawing his phone. Indeed it was a missed call from Will (or *Mylimasis* as his contact information was listed as). His heart sped up slightly faster than its normal even cadence.

Was Will hurt? Fearful? Could this be an emergency? He calculated how long it would take him to reach his house if speeding, just in case. In his mind he preemptively canceled all other appointments for the day, and even envisioned the placating calls he would have to make to each client.

Just as he was unlocking his phone, it rang again. He answered it promptly, a thread of anxiety present in his voice.

“Will? Is everything alright?”

Will’s breathy laugh washed over him like a cool breeze. “Everything’s fine, Hannibal. I just wanted to hear your voice.”

Hannibal sighed. “You’ll be the death of me, my darling.”

Unseen to Hannibal, Will smiled. “Can you come home?” he asked hopefully.

Hannibal licked his lips. “Soon, beloved. I have a few more clients and then paperwork to complete, but I’ll be home soon.”

Will sighed. “I have a surprise for you, when you get home.”

Hannibal quirked an eyebrow. “Oh really? That will make the hours pass slowly, then, until I can see you again.”

Will laughed. “Hopefully not. Anyway…I’ll see you when you get home?”

“Until then, Will.”

Hannibal ended the call, still looking fondly at his cell phone. The hours would pass slowly, indeed.

---

Will met Hannibal at the door with a kiss, soft and leisurely and sweet. He had showered and dressed in a plaid flannel shirt, something he’d chosen himself, and a pair of well-loved jeans. His hair was styled in some semblance of organized chaos, and Hannibal noted that he would soon need a trim.

If he so desired one. Will made those sorts of choices for himself now.

Hannibal leaned into the kiss, then broke into a smile. “A wonderful welcome,” he mused as he grabbed Will around the waist.

Will was positively vibrating with energy. He gave Hannibal another quick peck, and then caught his eyes. “Let me take you out? It won’t spoil our dinner, I promise.”

Hannibal smiled, pulling him close. “I’ll follow your lead,” Hannibal agreed.

Will led them to a quaint little soda fountain in the city’s historic district. He settled them at a round bistro table and went to the counter. He came back with two ice cream sundaes, extra cherries for himself.

“This is supposed to be the best ice cream in the city,” Will added, placing Hannibal’s sundae in front of him.

Hannibal took a bite, and indeed it was excellent. He watched Will swirl his spoon through the chocolate and caramel, charmed as usual by everything he did.

“You know, I wish I could do more things for you,” Will began. “Take you places, treat you properly.”

Hannibal was taken aback. “You make me feel very special Will. I assure you that’s not necessary.”

Will licked the chocolate from his lips. “Yes, but I *want* to do it. I want to be able to spoil you, like you spoil me.”

His cheeks were pink as he popped a cherry in his mouth, and Hannibal considered. “The money I give you…would you like more?”

Will vehemently shook his head. “I…I want my own money,” he finally said. “The money you give me is still yours.” He dipped his chin, looking a little forlorn. “You do everything for me Hannibal. I’d like to do something for you.”

Hannibal sat back, deep in thought. He did not want to deny Will his desire for independence or hinder his development in anyway. “Perhaps it’s time you started thinking about your future, Will. A career, if you would like one.”

Will’s eyes lit brightly, and there was a smudge of chocolate sauce on his upper lip. Hannibal wanted to kiss it away, but he smudged it off with his thumb instead.

“Do you really mean it?” Will asked hopefully. “I mean, you wouldn’t mind if I went to college?”

Hannibal leaned forward and grabbed his hand. “Your potential is limitless, Will. I would never stand in the way of that.”

Will squeezed his hand, looking down at their interwoven fingers. Hannibal could almost hear the wheels turning.

“I’ve been thinking about law enforcement,” Will added shyly. “Maybe I could go to the FBI academy.”

Hannibal nodded. “You can take online classes. Selfishly I would like to keep you near me.”

Will’s face darkened.  “Oh I don’t want to leave home, Hannibal. I want to be with you. I just also want…other things.”

Hannibal reached across the small table and caressed his face. “It’s perfectly normal to want those things, Will. I want what you want. I would have you happy.”

Will leaned into the touch, nuzzling Hannibal’s hand. “I am happy Hannibal. You make me happy.”

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Later that evening they had settled on the couch in the study. Hannibal was reading to Will in Italian, and Will was leaned on his shoulder, his eyes half-closed.

“Should I continue?”

Will took the book from his hand and slid into his lap, bracing himself on the back of the couch. He looked up through a curtain of curls, sultrily shifting his hips.

He leaned forward and kissed Hannibal, simultaneously grinding into his lap where he could feel the growing hardness there. Hannibal groaned.

“I want you, Hannibal. All of you.”

Hannibal lifted his arms to trace his spine with his fingers, to wrap around and slide down to his waist, steadying him there.

“I know you think I don’t want to, or that it would hurt me, but it won’t. It won’t hurt as long as it’s you.”

Hannibal kissed him then, not artfully but passionately, teeth and tongues clashing in their hunger.

“Take me to bed, Hannibal. Please.”

Hannibal kissed him once more then stood, Will still in his arms. Will instinctively wrapped his legs around Hannibal’s waist and let himself be carried up the stairs.

Hannibal tossed him onto the bed, shedding his own clothes unhurriedly as he looked his fill of Will.

Will was reclining on the bed, his legs askew and braced on his elbows. He began to undress, and by the time Hannibal was finished, he was completely nude.

He was transcendent. Hannibal couldn’t get enough of the sight of him, of his mussed hair and smooth chest, his hard cock jutting from his body and the shapely legs akimbo in the sheets.

Hannibal leaned over him, pressing his body to his as he pulled a nipple into his mouth. They rutted together, drawing little moans and gasps from Will at the friction. As good as it was, it wasn’t enough.

Will braced his hands against Hannibal’s shoulders, his hips going up to meet his. “Want you,” he grunted. “More than anything.”

Hannibal kissed Will’s neck, letting his teeth graze the sensitive flesh beneath his ear. He found the lube and condoms where he kept them in the nightstand and slicked up his fingers.

Hannibal paused, Will’s pink entrance tight an inviting from where he knelt between his legs. Hannibal kissed the inside of his smooth thigh and sighed.

“I love you, Will.  I have for so long.”

Will smiled, letting his legs fall apart. “I know,” he said.

When Hannibal circled his rim with a cool finger, Will jumped, unused to the sensation. Hannibal was slow and methodical, letting his finger circle the pink pucker, massaging the muscle before he pressed in.

“Oooh,” Will gasped, instinctively clenching up at the instruction. Hannibal continued to pepper kisses down his thighs, all the while working just the one finger into his tight heat. When he felt Will’s body give, he added a second.

Will's erection flagged, but Hannibal was undeterred. He worked his fingers inside of him, adding more lube, easing them in and out until he found his prostate.

Will made a plaintive little noise, his legs trembling where Hannibal had bent them back against his body. His senses were on fire, pleasure settling low in his belly and the small of his back. He moaned, begging Hannibal not to stop.

Hannibal added a third finger, pleased as Will's body opened and contracted to receive him. Will was now fully hard again, and Hannibal leaned forward with his fingers deep in Will's body to mouth at his cock.

Will keened, his hips rising off the bed. A fine sweat had broken out on his beautifully flushed chest, his eyes were glazed, his lips red and glistening.

Hannibal withdrew his fingers, wiping them on his chest. He stroked himself once and rolled on a condom, slicking that up too.

"Are you ready for me, darling?"

Will shook his head furiously, mad with desire. "Want your cock," he moaned. "Please, I need you."

Hannibal lined up his cock with Will's entrance and pushed the fat head inside. The sensation was breathtaking…the tight heat of Will's channel strangling his cock; he had to restrain himself from thrusting all the way in and fucking him into the mattress.

Will grunted impatiently, clutching at Hannibal's shoulders. "Move," he ground out, his breath coming in startled bursts at the feeling of just the head of Hannibal's cock inside him.

Hannibal pushed in slowly, allowing Will time to adjust to the feeling of being filled. His arms trembled with the effort, and a low grown escaped him.

Hannibal withdrew, and then slammed back in again, nearly pushing Will up the bed. Will cried out, his nails digging tracks in Hannibal's back as he scrambled for purchase.

Another snap of his hips sent Will wailing, his legs wrapped tightly around his back. "Fuck me fuck me please Hannibal" he said over and over, and Hannibal silenced him with a sharp bite to his shoulder. It didn't draw blood, but there would be a bruise.

Will's cock bounced between them, and Will raised his hips, seeking friction against Hannibal's belly. Hannibal reached between them and stroked him in time with his thrusts, feeling his own orgasm barreling down on him.

Hannibal changed the angle of his thrusts, hammering Will's prostate. He could feel his climax like a bolt of lightning, straightening his spine and tightening his stomach muscles. His legs shook; his breathing was erratic. And just when he didn't think he could hold out any longer, Will broke like a dam.

The pleasure was blinding as it washed over Will, and the force of it left him trembling in the aftershocks. Hannibal fucked him through it, chasing his own release with grunts and

exclamations in a language unknown to Will. After several more thrusts, Hannibal spilled into the condom, riding his high until he softened and slipped out of his warm body. He disposed of the condom and pulled Will close, lathing over his nipples, the bite mark on his shoulder, his neck, wherever he could reach.

They lay there until they grew sticky, and Hannibal went to the bathroom for a washcloth to clean them up. Will thread his fingers through Hannibal's, turning his face into his neck and breathing in his scent.

Will raised up on an elbow, hair disheveled but eyes bright. He traced the sharp cheekbones of Hannibal's face.

"I love you too you know. So much. I'm so glad that you're my person."

Hannibal kissed him breathless. "My mylimasis," he whispered as he pulled away, and Will hummed.

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Bedelia had her legs crossed primly at the ankles, her shining, straw-colored hair over one shoulder. She had on a red silk shirt today with a modest décolletage.

"So tell me about your little project Hannibal. How are you and your slave getting along?"

Hannibal frowned, his hands folded in his lap. "I don't consider Will my slave," Hannibal said guardedly. "I don't think I ever did."

Bedelia gave him a close-lipped smile. "Yes I know. You were looking for a relationship, if I recall. And do you have it?"

Hannibal couldn't hide the smile; it was the most honest thing he'd ever shared with Bedelia. "I do," he said with some satisfaction. "Will and I are doing very well. He wants to attend the FBI Academy."

Bedelia's eyes widened a fraction, her mouth twitching. "Is he emancipated?"

Hannibal's cheeks burned, and he worked his mouth. "No," he admitted. "He isn't."

Bedelia nodded. "Does Will know that, to pursue this future he has imagined for himself, he must first be emancipated?"

Hannibal crossed his legs. "He does not."

Bedelia smiled then. "Will you tell him? Or will you allow him to play out this fantasy until it naturally loses steam?"

Hannibal looked down at his lap. "I don't know," he said hesitantly.

Bedelia shifted in her chair, pressing invisible wrinkles from her skirt. "You could emancipate him, of course," she said almost off-handedly. "By marriage."

“Or by death,” Hannibal added, and Bedelia acquiesced.

“Marriage would be preferable for both of you,” she said wryly.

Hannibal imagined being married to Will—Will as a free man—and smiled to himself. “Yes it would,” he replied.

Hannibal left Bedelia’s office with renewed purpose. He would marry Will…give him his freedom. Give him himself.

He took the long way, making several stops before arriving back home.

When he entered the house, Will was on his laptop, the sun streaming in through the window, fractal light catching in the chestnut strands of his hair.

Hannibal lowered to one knee, his arm outstretched. “Will,” he said, trying to get the young man’s attention.

Will turned, a look of shocked delight on his face. “Hannibal—“

“No, Will, just listen.” Hannibal withdrew the ring from his pocket, holding it out as an offering. “I want you to have everything, Will, everything you want. I can give you your freedom. I can give you my life.” He stretched out his arm, handing Will the platinum band. “Will you take it?”

Tears were streaming down Will’s face, and he shakily took the ring and slipped it on his finger.

“Yes Hannibal,” he said softly, then he laughed. “Yes, yes, yes,” he repeated as he pressed kisses to Hannibal’s lips, his cheek, the curve of his jaw.

Hannibal embraced him, breathing in his warm, clean scent. “I love you,” he whispered.

Will sighed. “And I love you.”

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End Notes

Kudos and comments are life! <3

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